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CHRIST OUR

A SERMON,

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IN BEHALF OF

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FOR

Promoting Christian Knowledge,

BY

HENRY EDWARD MANNING, M.A.,

ARCHDEACON OF CHICHESTER.

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TO THE MOST REVEREND

FATHER IN GOD,

EDWARD LORD ARCHBISHOP OF YORK,

&c. &c. &c.

THIS SERMON

AS A GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF

HIS GRACE'S KINDNESS

IS, WITH PERMISSION, DEDICATED

BY

HIS GRACE'S MOST HUMBLE

AND FAITHFUL SERVANT,

H. E. MANNING.



A SERMON, &c.

ISAIAH xxxii. 1, 2.

“ Behold a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest ; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

THIS promise is a prophecy of the reign of Hezekiah when truth and righteousness should once more bear rule in Jerusalem. The people had been oppressed by wicked kings, and worn out by the miseries which come in the train of unrighteous princes. The whole city was full of strife: the priesthood was debased: the tribunals of the law corrupt: “ judgment was turned away backward, truth was fallen in the street, and equity could not enter.” The public contentions penetrated even into private life: every household had its grief: and every poor man his wrong. The whole civil state was diseased and its frame disordered. They were days of sorrow for the weak and helpless: for the fatherless and the widow, and for the few that feared the Lord in Jerusalem: for the powers of evil carried all away: and there was none to resist them.

But the Lord promised that it should not be so for ever. There was a King yet to arise who should reign by a righteous sway: and his princes and ministers under him rule in truth and justice. And then every man should have his wrongs redressed, and hold his own in safety under the shelter of a righteous throne.

Such is the plain meaning of the prophecy. But we cannot read it without a consciousness that one greater than Hezekiah is here. As we dwell upon it, a broader light seems to arise from every part, and the outlines of some mightier kingdom to shape themselves before us. Plainly this prophecy was fulfilled in the reign of Hezekiah, but Hezekiah the king of the prophecy becomes, in turn, a type of Christ and of the kingdom of God.

The oppressions of Jerusalem are a faint type of the fallen condition of mankind. The kingdom of darkness was over all. Falsehood and wrong were its laws: and the supreme sway was in the hands of the prince of the power of the air: of the evil one and his angels. Sin and death with fear and anguish dwelt in the soul of man. Conscious guilt, and the torment of impurity and the gnawing of an evil heart drove men hither and thither for help and healing. They sought to their own wisdom and powers in vain: they turned to soothsayers and seers, to philosophers and wise men, to the powers and phenomena of nature, but there was no help in them. Sin and death were too mighty: the soil and the sting were in man's soul too deep for any thing in the world to heal. Naked and homeless, wounded and

dying, men went up and down, afflicted, and afflicting one another: full of fears, and vexation of spirit, having no hope, without God in the world. Such was the state of man: the great laws of God's kingdom were arrayed against him: his own being was marred, and his very nature was at war with God. He was conscious that he had fallen under the dominion of a power greater than the power of man: less only than the power of God: that he was the slave of a taskmaster from whom God alone could set him free: that he was in himself miserable and unclean, and that God alone could cleanse him, and give him rest. The wind and the tempest, the parching thirst, and the scorching heat of this evil world beat full upon him, and he was without hiding-place or shelter, without water to slake or shadow to cover him. Such is man by nature, in the struggle of temptation, in the season of pain, in the hour of death. Under all the pomp and glory of the heathen world, under all its majestic worship, and high-spoken philosophy, there was an anguish at the very heart. And this wretchedness was made all the sorer by the very medicines with which they thought to heal themselves. Their schemes of worship and expiation: their lustrations and sacrifices, and all the imaginary virtues by which they sought for health and peace: what did they but mock and betray them: lure them with false hopes and then leave them in bitterness, and disappointment: more conscious of their misery than ever. Such was the state of the Heathen world: and as it was with the Heathen so it was with the Jews—and much more so: for they had received the law of God in which the judgment of the world to come was recorded against every soul that sinneth. In that law

they learned the powers of sin and death: they discerned their own fallen, and helpless state. And this made them all the more to long for a hiding place, and a covert in which to shelter their weakness. The law was a schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ. It was a transcript of the holiness of God: and of the royal law of his kingdom: "Be ye holy; for I am holy."¹ And this they felt to be impossible. It was "not possible that the blood of bulls or of goats should take away sin."² Some great reality reaching to the spiritual laws of God's kingdom, something akin to the powers of life and death, was needed to reconcile and heal the fallen spirit of man.

And this is what is promised in this prophecy.

1. For first we learn that the rest and shelter of mankind is Christ himself. "A man shall be a hiding place from the wind." What man is this but "the man Christ Jesus."³ "God of the substance of the Father begotten before the world: and man of the substance of his mother born in the world. Perfect God, and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting." He is the almighty universal Healer of mankind. By his incarnation: by his life: by his death: by his resurrection: by his ascension into Heaven: by his unseen kingdom reigning over all: by his princes, the pastors of his church ruling in judgment, by his word, and by his sacraments, by his providence over his church and by his presence in it, He the prince of peace, the Lord our righteousness hath made Himself to be a hiding place from

¹ 1. Peter i. 16.

² Heb. x. 4.

³ 1. Tim. ii. 5.

the wind, a covert from the tempest as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. There is no sorrow of body or spirit for which there is not healing and consolation in him. Human nature has no capacity of suffering for which he has not a medicine and a cure. In the whole compass of human griefs there is no pang nor agony for which there is not healing in the Word made Flesh. From the sting of conscious guilt to the pure sorrow of the bereaved and desolate, there is no form of affliction which he has not a balm to allay. For He is Himself the medicine of all mankind. He is our "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."¹ He is "our peace."² He is "all, and in all."³ Christ in us is "the hope of glory."⁴ The man Christ Jesus is "the resurrection and the life."⁵ By his incarnation he hath purged our manhood: by his life and death he has overcome death and sin. In him mankind is by virtue and anticipation restored to more than original glory. We are made righteous and immortal. In him the second Adam there is the beginning of the new creation. He has restored the sovereignty of God over his own world: and the sovereignty of man over his own nature: and has exalted man even above angels: and enthroned our manhood at the right hand of God, whereby he has become a Prince and a Saviour to the world. And this he has done, first, by abolishing the guilt of sin. He has in himself made propitiation for us towards God. All the power of sin and death cannot reach the man that is sheltered under the atonement

¹ 1. Cor. i. 30.² Ephes. ii. 14.³ Col. iii. 11.⁴ Col. i. 27.⁵ John xi. 25.

of our Redeemer. He blotted out "the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way nailing it to his cross."¹ "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins."² His perpetual intercession is the perpetual cleansing of the penitent man.

But once more : He has not only made peace for us by Atonement towards God, but also by sanctifying our very nature, He has made peace for us in ourselves. By his incarnation He has abolished sin itself. He is our shelter from the taint and dominion of the sin which dwells in us. This is our true misery. Nothing else is worthy to be called misery but the sorrow which comes through sin. What can be more utterly miserable than a man who is inflated with pride, or tormented by jealousy : or defiled by lust ? The consciousness that sin is in him : and that he is a defaced and darkened creature in the sight of God and of his Holy Angels : and the sorrow and the shame which come with this consciousness : and the pain of being tempted to unseemly and hateful things, and often overcome by temptation—these are the things that make a man truly miserable. It is easier to bear any purer affliction such as sickness, contradiction of the world, or false accusations than the sting and solicitation of sin : for these are sorrows that have no alleviation. We may try to excite ourselves by a false happiness : and to forget our inward plague in the noise and lightness of a worldly life : or

¹ Col. ii. 14.

² 1. John ii. 12.

to take refuge in theories and philosophical refinement : or to subdue our evils by a proud self-discipline, but it is all in vain. None but He can give us rest. Nothing but the virtues which go out of Him can heal our inveterate ills. If we will we may flee from ourselves to Him. He will receive us and defend us against ourselves : taking from us, one by one, our spiritual taints ; shedding abroad in us the spirit of his own sanctity ; cleansing us every whit. We can never be free from the fear and distress of our hearts until they are cleansed by his spirit : until we ourselves, like unclean spirits, are cast out of ourselves, and our hearts are possessed and hallowed by the presence of Christ through the Holy Ghost. He is the only refuge, when the world, the flesh and the devil, “ the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,” when our own evil passions, and pampered sins, the anger, vanity, impatience, and the manifold powers of sin which were born in us set the battle in array, “ when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall :”¹ then that Man is a covert and a hiding-place, a river of cleansing, and a shadow of refreshment : then He will not only forgive but will cleanse our sin : will give us inward peace, by giving to us purity of heart : by clean changing all we are into his own likeness ; and filling us with the mind that is in Himself.

Again, he is the true and only comforter of mankind under the sorrows which came with sin into the world. Death, and disease, anguish and bitterness are upon the body and soul of man. To most men

¹ Isaiah xxv. 4.

they are an intolerable suffering, preying upon them with a complete mastery. The sorrows of the Heathen and of them that live without God are unutterably great: shadows of the unallayed and endless torment beyond the grave. But sorrow seems to be in one sense the peculiar inheritance of the saints. The holiest seem to enter deepest into the mystery of affliction. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."¹ No law is written more broadly in the kingdom of God. But the whole order is reversed. Christ has said, "Blessed are they that mourn."² Death and the grave, sickness and wasting, anxiety and fear of coming sorrows are the shrouded tokens of love which He sends to his elect. The laws of affliction and mortality which are upon all the world have their full counterpoise in the peace and immortality which are in Christ Jesus. To them that are without Christ they are indeed mere unlightened suffering. The afflicted race of man have no other shelter: no other perfect sympathy. The world is a hard unsympathising comforter: a poor friend in the long hours of grief and desolation: in the faintness and weariness of sorrow, when a man's throat is dry, and his sight faileth for waiting so long upon God: then when all these fail, when the nearest and fondest cannot soothe, and the tenderest human sympathy, the most pathetic consolations, are all unpersuasive and unreal, He is "as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." We may tell out before him all our troubles and fear, and beseech him, further, to look into those unuttered griefs for which

¹ Heb. xii. 6.

² Matthew v. 4.

we can find no words : which we hide even from our nearest friends : and hardly venture to be conscious of ourselves. To an imperfect love and an imperfect sympathy we dare not make them so much as suspected : but to him we may lay open all : and He will feel with us in perfect human sympathy blended with a divine compassion.

2. We may learn another truth from this prophecy. It is said "a king shall reign." If, therefore, we would partake of the rest and shelter which is in Him we must become partakers of His kingdom.

In what way the Incarnation and the Atonement of the Son of God may mitigate even for the Heathen world the laws of sin and death which are against them : in what way the virtues of the One Great Sacrifice may go out to heal multitudes who have never beheld the Cross visibly lifted up upon them, we know not. God is of larger hand in mercy than we conceive. He has depths of compassion into which angels cannot look. It may be that even they who are beyond the bounds of His visible kingdom of righteousness on earth may be drawn by ways inscrutable into the precincts of eternal life. With this we have nothing to do, but to hope and wait for the day of revelation. For us, however, this is certain, we know of no way to be healed but by submitting ourselves to him in his visible kingdom. It is not merely by knowing these things that we became partakers of it. Christianity is not only a theory of spiritual doctrine, but an order of spiritual obedience. Knowledge is our guide to Christ's kingdom : but knowledge alone cannot incorporate us with it. Sensual and

unbelieving men may have knowledge. Scoffers have had clearer views than many an unlettered saint. Neither can any acts of our own will, or our inward resolutions make us partakers of the kingdom of Christ: except He who alone hath the key of David, who “openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth,”¹ shall receive us to be his subjects. He only can open the gate of his church. It is an act of sovereignty, a prerogative of his kingly office to make men subjects of his kingdom. Therefore when He sent forth his servants to gather out by teaching and baptism a people for his name, He said “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.” To his apostles he gave the keys of the kingdom of Heaven: to their successors the same charge has descended. What they do, He does: their acts, if the keys err not, are His. What they bind on earth is bound in heaven, and what they loose on earth is loosed in heaven.²

This then is the office of the church, to gather out of the world the guilty and defiled, to bring them to cleansing and to peace: to seek out the burdened and the mourners to bind up them that are broken in heart, and to give medicine to heal their sickness: to represent to mankind not the power and Godhead alone, but the care and the pity, the sympathy and the love of Christ: to bring home his mercy to the sufferings of men: to prolong his very presence, and the ministries of his compassion.

I have been drawn to these thoughts by the subject

¹ Matthew xvi. 19.

² Rev. iii. 7.

which brings us together to-day. You are associated for the purpose of aiding the pastors of the church in their work of salvation in this land. Your object is to promote the knowledge of Christ, by spreading the word of God, and the offices of the church: and to provide sound religious books, and books of a general sort on sound religious principles. It is of the highest moment to consecrate literature: to hold it in alliance with religion and with the church. The power of the press is one of the most marked and pregnant phenomena of these latter times. Its effects both for good, and for evil are great and awful. It must be turned to the service of God and of his truth, or its subtil and terrific working will be guided by the spirit of Antichrist.

Now it is by knowledge, as the guide, that men are brought to Christ. Religious knowledge does indeed reveal to man the nature of God and of his own spiritual being, the character of Christ and the laws of his kingdom. So far is well: but this is not all. It must be followed up by other ministries. It is no hard matter to diffuse knowledge even of religion. The power of civilization in exciting the intellect, and the facility with which a mechanical habit of reading is obtained, render it no difficult matter to spread christian knowledge as such. But this will not suffice. Knowledge alone will not make men subjects of Christ's kingdom. The root of ignorance is sin: and if we would disperse ignorance we must dispel the powers of guilt and pollution which prey upon the spiritual nature of mankind. We must find an avenue to the human will: and wean it from the lusts of this fallen world, and draw it towards the

purities of Christ's kingdom. We must teach men to feel in the depth of their spiritual being that they are storm-beaten, and withered under the blast of the evil one, before they will yearn for a hiding-place and a shelter. What can fall more empty and meaningless than these words of the prophet upon the ears of a vicious and deadened people? If they be understood at all, for the most part, they excite the deep seated enmity of a corrupt and alienated will. Wheresoever the lusts of this world have confirmed their dominion, the very name of Christ is a word of fear and of provocation. For it is against the purity, not against the knowledge of the gospel, that the enmity of men is pointed. And none are so stubbornly set against the reign of Christ as relapsed and outcast christians : men over whom truth has lost its power : and sin has regained its dominion : into whom the unclean spirit, once cast out, has returned again with a sevenfold presence. Such, to our humiliation, in this our favoured but guilty land, are to be found among our neglected millions. Who can utter the depth of the abasement to which they have fallen? Who can conceive in his heart the awful mysteries of guilt and misery which our thronging towns, and our mines beneath the earth conceal from the sight of men? Who can imagine the secrets of defilement which are naked to the eye of God? It is most awful : a phenomenon of spiritual wo to which there is no parallel in christendom : the like of which Christ's church has hardly seen before. What sorrows and miseries are there : what torment of conscience and despair : to what form of affliction are they strangers? Sickness, anguish of body, with all the sufferings of our overlaboured and toil-worn humanity, bereavement of

heart, and bitterness of soul, widowhood and desolation, all these prey upon them as upon ourselves. We know the sharpness of the edge in the midst of our many consolations. What must be their unalleviated sorrows? There is no way of mitigating their sufferings but by bringing them to know and to obey our Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and their King. The political, economical, and social schemes by which men of this world think to raise and to reunite the people of this country are poor remedies. There is a hardness of heart in the ignorance which our modern theorists exhibit as to what really makes the weal and wo of mankind. The maladies of human nature lie too deep for any but the healing which is in the kingdom of Christ. Nothing but waking men up to feel their fallen state and bringing them not to partake only of knowledge even though it be religious, but to yield obedience to the rule of Christ, will suffice. We must manifest to them the love and patience of Christ our Lord and theirs: and the purity and rest of them that are the subjects of his righteous and peaceful throne.

Now for this work I cannot bring myself to speak of money. Alas, if you do not give of your substance according to your ability and your obligation; but alas too, if you give no more than this: no better gift: nothing that penetrates more deeply into the reality of this great and sacred work. We are all charged with the duty of promoting it. Chiefly indeed it lies on us, the Clergy, to whom He has delivered over the divine commission which he received of his Father. By word and life we must win men to Christ. "Necessity is laid upon" us; yea, wo is unto us if

we preach not the Gospel. It were better for us that we had never been born.

But hardly less, though in other ways, are our lay-brethren bound to work with us. As they possess rank or riches, and with them the manifold opportunities of good, so shall they give account of their stewardship when the king of righteousness shall take account with his servants. You are charged with the welfare of your fellows. We know who it was that said. "Am I my brother's keeper?" and we know also his condemnation. We are our brother's keeper. Every member of Christ's body is charged with the welfare of the whole. Each one of us in his own way. You that are lords of the soil, to whom the benigner powers of the old feudal state are still continued: those that live and toil, and die upon your broad lands are entrusted to your paternal care. You are related to them by a bond which, as it exacts service of them, so it demands a generous solicitude from you. It is your high duty to foster and to watch over their temporal, but above all their spiritual welfare: to spread among them the knowledge of Christ by the ministry of the church, and by your own words and life.

There are others, also, who make their gains by the labour and skill of manufacturers. To those that toil for them they owe a great debt of christian recompense. It is a perilous thing to draw wealth from the labour of men without Christ in the world: for there is a canker upon the gold and silver which is heaped together by the toil of the miserable and debased. Sooner or later it will eat through the bags in which

it is laid up : and the treasures which are amassed by merciless hands will vanish suddenly. Wealth gotten in unhallowed ways is no wealth : it is but an illusion, and a phantom : full of allurements and intoxication of heart. Let us beware how we are lifted up by our national greatness. The true wealth of nations is righteousness, mercy, and the fear of God. All besides is peril, and an awful probation.

It is in your hands, then, to do a blessed work of mercy : in converting sinners to the way of life ; in breaking hardened hearts into repentance ; in bringing back the soiled to purity ; in sheltering the young from the snares and assaults of the wicked, in gathering out the elect of God from the darkness and pollution of the world. All this you may bear a part in doing ; each in his way and measure, some by direct ministries of charity ; some by teaching ; some by alms ; some by intercessions ; all working together to restore the kingdom of righteousness and peace in our land. It is a work of mercy and of mystery, which is ever advancing to its end. Whether we will be fellow workers with Him or no : whether we will be for him or against him : His work can no man hinder. If we will not, He will raise up another people in our stead. Even now throughout all the earth, among all languages, people, and tongues, the penitent, and weary, and broken in heart are pressing in under the shadow of his throne : even now they are gathering within the folds of his pavilion : in the sanctuary of his unseen presence : and he is comforting them, and binding up their wounds, and revealing to them his own pierced side, and the crown of thorns, and the tokens of his life-giving passion, the emblems of his

incarnate glory, working in them compunction and cleansing, and consolation, The mystical number of the penitent and the purified is ever growing to its fulness : and the end of all things is at hand ; our life, each one, is fast running out, the day of salvation to our land, it may be, is far spent. Our provocations have been many, our sins of omission exceeding great. What are we now doing for those for whom the Son of God shed his blood upon the cross? Let us redeem the time that remains : and strive with sevenfold strength, by prayers and alms, by pureness and charity, by persevering efforts both in word and deed “ to seek for Christ’s sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children who are in the midst of this naughty world that they may be saved through Christ for ever.”¹

¹ Office for ordering of Priests.

